

SCHOOL AGE EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FOR TRANSITION TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION

EXPERIÊNCIAS DA FASE ESCOLAR DE ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS RELATIVAS À TRANSIÇÃO PARA A EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR.

EXPERIENCIAS DE LA ETAPA ESCOLAR DE ESTUDIANTES UNVERSITARIOS RELACTIVAS A SU TRANSICIÓN PARA LA EDUCACION SUPERIOR

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Abstract

The study was designed to examine the school age experiences of university students, specifically the roles their school teachers, parents, and they themselves played in their preparation for higher education. One thousand students from twenty universities were randomly selected. Data collected through developed questionnaire was tabulated, analysed and discussed. Chi Square was applied to determine whether the observed frequencies were significantly different from the expected frequencies. Main conclusions of study were that the students negated the role of school teachers, student self, peers and school environment with the preparation skills needed for university level work, while only parents' role was found significant in preparing students for higher education.

Keywords: School Age, Role of teachers, Role of Parents, Role of Peers, Role of School Environment, Transition to Higher Education.

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo é analisar as experiências da fase escolar de estudantes universitários, principalmente o papel desempenhado por professores, pais e pelos próprios alunos em sua preparação para a educação superior. Mil alunos foram selecionados aleatoriamente entre vinte universidades. Os dados coletados com base em um questionário desenvolvido foram analisados e discutidos. O quadrado de Chi foi aplicado para determinar se as frequências observadas foram significativamente diferentes das frequências esperadas. As principais conclusões do estudo foram que os alunos negaram o papel dos professores, deles próprios, dos colegas de classe e do ambiente escolar em relação às habilidades de preparação necessárias para o trabalho de nível universitário, enquanto que somente o papel dos pais foi considerado significativo na preparação dos alunos para a educação superior.

Palavras-chave: fase escolar, papel dos professores, papel dos pais, papel dos colegas de classe, papel do ambiente escolar, transição para educação superior.

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar las experiencias de la etapa escolar de estudiantes universitarios, principalmente el papel que juegan los profesores, padres y los alumnos mismos, en su preparación hacia la educación superior. Fueron seleccionados de manera aleatoria mil alumnos entre veinte universidades. Los datos colectados por una encuesta

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fueron analizados e discutidos. El cuadrado de *Chi* fue utilizado para determinar si las frecuencias observadas fueron significativamente diferentes de las frecuencias esperadas. Las principales conclusiones fueron que los alumnos negaron el papel de sus maestros, de si mismos, de sus compañeros de clase y del ambiente escolar en relación a las habilidades de preparación necesaria al trabajo universitario, mientras que solamente el papel de los padres fue considerado significativo en la preparación de los alumnos para la educación superior.

Palabras-clave: etapa escolar, papel de los profesores, papel de los padres, papel de los compañeros de clase, papel del ambiente escolar, transición para la educación superior.

Education is a social process that prepares the young generation of a society for life. It is the means of transmitting the values and accumulated knowledge of a society to its younger generation. It prepares them to face the varying situations in life. It is designed to teach them their culture, mould their behaviour and prepare them to eventually play their role in the society. The traditional goal of education is transmission of the culture, the preservation of the past and the present, and the development of intellect (Farooq, 1994). Education is the only instrument by which a nation transforms itself from what it is into or what it hopes to be. It is this social instrument through which we can guide its destiny and shape its future (Panda, 1988).

Education is a basic human right. Human life is the most sacred among all the creations of Allah (God). It is education, which promotes his intelligence, enables him to be industrious and ensures his progress. Progress of any society is impossible without education. Education is essential for a nation as food for a living thing. It imparts the basic rules of life, which enlighten the real progress to individuals of any society. Education is as much important for social and economic development that an uneducated society can not reach the destiny of economic development and political stability. It is the only powerful and workable means through which man can get the position of a noble man.

Govt. of Pakistan (1998) emphasis that education is now has recognised catalyst of change and the force of future, without which effective participation in the life of modern world is unimaginable. Thus education develops in the individual, sense of social responsibility and a capacity to perform his duties towards the society and performs a very important social function. Secondary education has primary education as its base and becomes in turn a base for higher education itself. The secondary stage of education is perhaps the most important all over the world, whatever the educational system. Secondary education is not only an end in itself but also a means to further individual and national development.

One historic mission of higher education has been to produce good citizens whereas good citizenship involves being an independent, educated, and employed member of

society. Student affairs professionals believe that by teaching students to be productive individuals who make positive contributions to society, these students will become good citizens. To ensure that students develop into productive citizens, institutions of higher education aim to educate the whole student. To achieve this goal, universities strive to develop various capacities within each student. These capacities include the development of intellectual abilities, an understanding of oneself, development of an ethical and spiritual meaning in life, and an exploration of career interests (Whitt, 1997).

Development of students' intellectual abilities is a main goal of institutions of higher education. These institutions require that students meet specific requirements before they are admitted to the higher education. However, not all students are equally and adequately prepared academically at school age when they enter universities. Often, the students who are not prepared well during school education, struggle with academics. Therefore, schools have a greater responsibility to provide services that promote the intellectual, emotional, social and cognitive development of students. In order to achieve better results in universities, schools need to offer academic support services in areas such as tutoring, guidance on study habits, and workshops to promote personal motivation (Whitt, 1997).

The role of the school teachers is important for the preparation of student for better performance at higher education. By helping students develop strategies to analyse their self knowledge, educational aspirations, goal setting and career objectives, high school students are more prepared for higher education activities (Feller, 1994; Stringfield, 1997). It was also found that the high school guidance counsellor played an important role in guiding the high school student about the number and type of courses needed for higher education.

Parents have also been examined with respect to their role in preparing their student for university. With the appropriate information, parents can assist their students in the selection of a realistic career and the preparation for that career (Herbert, 1996). Through increased awareness, parents know they need to be involved early in their student's educational program (Birrell and Ross, 1996; Monahan, 1993). Mathews (1998) found that parents should assure that the curriculum materials their students use and subjects their students participate in are challenging. Research has also shown higher-achieving students have parents who are more involved in their educational program.

Therefore at school age teachers' positive interaction, professional competencies, teaching skills, parental involvement, students' own capabilities, peers' engagement and school environment all play critical role for strengthening the potential required for better performance at university level. The study has significance for both future professional

practice and further research. The results of this study explores information that would enable school administrators, teaching staff and parents to assist them in helping the children achieve the skills needed to succeed in universities. School students may use the results to increase their understanding of what types of study habits and organisational skills are important for university academic preparation. This research may provide a pavement for future research studies in the same field.

Objectives

Following objectives were kept forth for the study:

- I. To explore the role of school teachers in preparing the students for higher education.
- II. To examine the role of parents in preparing their children for higher education.
- III. To observe the self role of students in preparing themselves for higher education.
- IV. To examine the role of peers in inspiring the students for higher educational abilities.
- V. To observe the role of school environment prompting the students for higher education.

Sample

In order to ensure adequate representation, a systematic random sampling process was used in order to select the sample of this study. Twenty Universities with five departments from each were selected randomly. A sample of one thousand students was drawn in such a way that ten students from each department of Sample University were selected randomly.

Instrument

As the study was survey in nature therefore questionnaire was used for data collection. Researcher developed a questionnaire using five-point Likert Scale on the basis of literature, related researches and with the help of supervisor. First part of the questionnaire consisted of five items and was designed to obtain information on the selected demographic characteristics of university students, like gender, subject and class of study, academic qualification of parents of respondents and the profession of parents of respondents. Second part showed the teachers' role for preparing the students for higher education. Fifteen items were included in this part. Third part showed the parents' role for preparing the students for higher education. Thirteen items were included in this part. Part four reflected the students' self-role for preparing them for higher education and this part

contained fourteen items. Part five of questionnaire showed the peers' role and contained eleven items. Part six of questionnaire consisted of nine items showing school's environment role for preparing the students for higher education. Three open-ended items were kept in questionnaire to inquire some other related factors and collect suggestions for improvement of the situation.

Procedure

The items of questionnaire were pilot tested on thirty students and reviewed by a panel of experts for validation. On the basis of revealed data and opinion of experts questionnaire was revised and final version of questionnaire was developed. For examining the reliability three type of analysis were carried out to see if items defined a homogeneous area of content. In this concern scores of respondents on each item were correlated with total score of them (minus their score on that item score). Second analysis was carried out in which fifteen highest scoring was compared with fifteen lowest scoring. And, for determining the internal consistency of the questionnaire Co-efficient of Alpha was applied by splitting half the scores as even and odd. Results of the pilot test were analysed using the software package for social sciences (SPSS) statistical software package, version 11.0. Chi Square was applied to determine whether the observed frequencies were significantly different from the expected frequencies. Parameter for acceptance and rejection of statement was used at 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

Table1: Role of Teachers for preparing the Students at School Age for better transition towards Higher Education

Tasks done by Teachers	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	χ^2
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Zero period or extra classes	89	112	172	393	234	296.27
Continuity of lecture method	224	346	176	202	52	221.88
Keeping the students on task	114	158	152	312	264	140.52
Providing individual attention	215	203	104	242	236	62.55
Involving the students in class discussions	197	183	208	210	202	2.33
Discussion of test results	221	295	176	167	141	73.06
Recognizing talent of students	233	223	160	182	202	17.73
High academic expectations	212	252	177	258	101	82.71
Explained the students university admission requirements	77	114	162	345	302	276.99
Encouraging regularity	122	241	218	281	138	92.47
Developing time management skills	130	164	163	291	252	92.75
Encouraging leadership skills	94	163	246	246	251	97.19
Exploring career goals	104	196	137	306	257	138.43
Arousing sense of competition	178	339	157	170	156	122.45
Proper guidance and counselling	112	209	206	222	251	54.73
MEAN	155	213	174	255	203	29.52

df = 4

 χ^2 at 0.05 = 9.488

Table 1 indicates that the calculated mean value of χ^2 was found to be 29.52, which is greater than table value at 0.05 level. Hence, the overall role of teachers for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education would have been accepted due to the value of Chi-square, otherwise, the negative responses are more than the positive ones, which indicates that majority of the respondents negated the role of teachers for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education.

Table 2: Role of Parents for preparing the Students at School Age for better transition towards Higher Education

Tasks done by Parents	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	χ^2
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Keen interest in academic problems	438	271	90	109	92	468.65
Arranged tuition for weak academic areas	284	325	118	152	121	189.75
Helped in choosing courses	124	223	144	264	245	77.81
Aware of admission criteria of higher education	207	146	139	266	142	64.03
Reviewed school test results	147	182	124	246	301	106.13
Love for knowledge	389	245	79	144	143	293.86
Arranged suitable environment for studies	146	173	60	281	340	247.03
The qualification of parents as a help	389	183	130	150	148	230.57
Encouraged to participate in school activities	308	339	90	119	144	263.91
Provided emotional support	159	158	108	326	249	150.93
A source of motivation for successful transition to higher education	349	268	87	133	163	227.26
Encouraging to take part in sports	186	158	143	281	232	63.97
Encouraged to schedule study time	123	147	109	308	313	207.26
Mean	250	217	109	214	210	56.83

df = 4

 χ^2 at 0.05 = 9.488

Table 2 indicates that the calculated mean value of χ^2 was found to be 56.83, which is greater than table value at 0.05 level. Hence, the overall role of parents for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education is accepted.

Table 3: Role of Students themselves for preparing them at School Age for better transition towards Higher Education

Tasks done by Students	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	χ^2
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Continuity of recalling facts and memorization	151	295	211	193	150	70.48
Self-motivated for academic achievements	127	175	92	239	367	235.14
Attended regular classes	374	320	64	131	111	379.27
Habit of attentive listener	294	405	122	114	65	412.83
A serious learner	89	194	99	246	372	271.29
Consistency of asking questions	166	145	148	209	332	121.95
Habit of book consultation	145	399	167	163	126	252.80
Intense study habit	131	171	181	176	341	132.10
Participation in school sports and similar activities	98	204	234	188	276	87.48
The ability of writing essay/article	180	133	154	281	252	81.35
Language skills matured	109	99	195	242	355	221.48
Participated in co curricular activities	119	207	134	229	311	120.64
Putting forth their efforts	154	131	158	229	328	129.33
Self confidence	257	402	94	171	76	357.53
Mean	171	234	147	201	247	35.08

df = 4

 χ^2 at 0.05 = 9.488

Table 3 indicates that the calculated mean value of χ^2 was found to be 35.08, which is greater than table value at 0.05 level. Hence, the overall role of students themselves for preparing the them at school age for better performance at higher education would have been accepted due to the value of chi-square, otherwise, the negative responses are more than the positive ones, which indicates that majority of the respondents negated their own role for preparing themselves at school age for the better performance at higher education.

Table 4: Role of Peers for preparing the students at School Age for better transition towards Higher Education

Tasks done by Peers	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	χ^2
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Provided much cooperation and lovable environment	225	339	143	143	150	144.72
Specific class motivation by friends	118	181	176	311	214	100.89
Similar future plans of friends at school provided motivation	160	290	186	195	169	54.41
Communication with friends	176	370	158	179	117	192.85
Assisted in home work and test preparation	133	208	125	206	328	132.99
Helped to develop problem solving approach	157	147	135	202	359	170.84
Kept involved in discussions	164	175	124	303	234	97.31
Inspired the students to take part in sports	283	229	217	85	186	107.20
Provided counselling to select appropriate subjects	171	199	152	266	212	38.23
A source of competition	257	329	125	156	133	159.70
Shared their future plans	155	151	165	131	398	248.08
Mean	182	238	155	198	227	22.63

df = 4

 χ^2 at 0.05 = 9.488

Table 4 indicates that the calculated mean value of χ^2 was found to be 22.63, which is greater than table value at 0.05 level. Hence, the overall role of peers for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education would have been accepted due to the value of chi-square, otherwise, the negative responses are more than the positive ones, which conveys that majority of the respondents negated the role of peers for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education.

Table 5: Role of School's Environment for preparing the students at School Age for better transition towards Higher Education

Tasks done by School Environment	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	χ^2
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Generated positive characteristics	248	152	104	330	166	159.40
Physical facilities provided	168	160	188	232	252	32.48
The school discipline engaged in positive learning	201	285	198	181	135	59.08
Arranged inspiring activities	122	144	179	267	288	109.47
Arranged parent teachers meetings	154	189	203	204	250	23.81
School reporting presented areas of achievement to draw trend data	224	298	216	165	97	111.35
Curricula was aligned with skill accomplishments	145	143	217	226	269	60.00
Head teacher's leadership, monitoring and supportive behaviour	189	179	164	238	230	21.01
Language environment supported	138	225	145	257	235	59.84
Mean	177	197	179	233	214	11.32

df = 4

χ^2 at 0.05 = 9.488

Table 5 indicates that the calculated mean value of χ^2 was found to be 11.32, which is greater than table value at 0.05 level. Hence, the overall role of school's environment for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education would have been accepted due to the value of chi-square, otherwise, the negative responses are more than the positive ones. Therefore majority of the respondents negated the role of school's environment for preparing the students at school age for better performance at higher education.

DISCUSSION

The different and distinct as they may be, schools and institutions of higher education are intimately related with their missions, functions, operations and inter-dependence. They are the institutions in our society created and sustained for the primary purpose of learning, discovering, fostering and communicating knowledge. They deal with the same population at successive levels, each level of education has to respond to what the previous level presented to it. School education plays the role of spinal cord in the life of national economy. If school education is more balanced, reliable, qualitative and universal then the economic and social system of the country will be more qualitative, healthy and developed. Secondary education is an important stage of school system for diversification into vocational and higher education; it is considered a terminal stage for majority of the students and is also a significant determinant of quality in higher and professional education. Therefore, the students of this stage should be carefully and

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properly nourished, nurtured, developed, taught and trained for the peace, progress and prosperity of the country. The students should be prepared for the world of work and at the same time there should be an encouragement for the gifted ones to go to higher education for playing leadership role.

Students come to universities with their minds already stuffed with ideas, habits and attitudes which were already infused in them during school education. School age of students was influenced sharply by various agents; the first important influence was of the family and social life of the family; second was the influence of the company they kept inside or outside the school; third was the influence of teachers and finally the influence of school environment. Their institutions exposed them to social and cultural activities which brought into play their character and personality traits. Higher education can itself be neither effective nor equitable unless schools improve their capacity to educate all children regardless of ethnic background, socio-economic status, or ability (Timpare and White, 1998).

Herbert (1996) was of the view that the parents have key role in preparing and transmitting the students to higher level of education. Positive interaction between parents and students results in positive relationship that influence how well students perform at school (Valery *et al.* 1997). No doubt parents who are supportive and critical are likely to encourage children in their academic achievement through academic, financial, moral and emotional support. In present study the role of parents was found unsatisfactory in some tasks where they were not paying more and dedicated attention to their children in their academic pursuits. Whereas overall role of parents was found satisfactory for their successful transition towards higher education.

Teachers have pivotal role in entire education system and overall development of students. Pedagogical styles of school teachers can affect preparedness of students for higher education (Kagan, 1993). In present study teachers' role did not emerge forceful as society, parent and student expected. Today most of the teachers are swamped by the race for money and positions and they never thought of their identification and responsibilities expected from them. On the other hand society do not give them due respect which results in decay of their morale. The more the society develops on the right socialist and humanist lines, the more will it help the teacher. All the same, teachers should rise above their own personal and social limitations to develop the society. Still there are teachers among us all along the hierarchy who are dedicated and if all teachers decide to follow their example, they will be able to play real role.

Interacting with friends is almost universally seen as important in the life of a school student. Whether that interaction takes place in school, in homes, or in other public places, it seems to be a key component of an individual student's interest in instructional and non-instructional activities (Saleem, 2001). The schools' efforts to promote positive peer relationships and provide avenues for students to participate and garner a sense of belonging did not go unnoticed. The student's learning curve is increased when there is an interactive relationship between the student and its peers (Foy, 1994). Generally speaking, students reacted favourably school practices and in some cases found them to be a strong motivational force in their quest for success. In this study students negated the role of peers in tasks of homework assistance, test preparation, developing problem solving approach and keeping involved in class discussions, which were required to be inculcated at school age for showing better performance at higher education.

Individual students themselves, in some cases, can determine their own level of engagement without the influence of schools, families, or peers. Even though these students do not seem isolated from the other spheres of influence their individual determination to either succeeded or failed rests with themselves (Constanino, 2002). Some students indicated that it was their own inherent desire to do well or participate in school that shaped their performance better at university level.

Through an understanding of family perceptions of the same issues discussed with students in this study, more useful information about how to directly engage families may emerge that would be beneficial to all high schools who wish their students to perform and achieve at high levels. Future research needs to compare and contrast high schools that have made significant efforts to promote the types of involvement and engagement necessary for students be engaged with school with those school who do not see a benefit or not able to articulate a vision in this area. It may be necessary to replicate this study with those students who are not achieving and whose disengagement with the school is obvious and well documented.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall teacher's role in preparing students for higher education was found unsatisfactory. But in some areas, majority of university students believed that they were properly prepared by school teachers to show better performance at higher education by inculcating lecture method, recognising their academic strengths and talent, arousing a sense of competition and keeping high academic expectations at their school age. Moreover, it was also concluded that students at higher education perceived that their

school teachers did not better prepare them for university level work. It would be reasonable to assume that these students negated the role of school teachers with the preparation skills needed for university level work by low level of individual attention, involving in class discussion, developing leadership and time management skills, to make understand the career goals and low level of guidance and counselling.

Overall role of parents was found much better than other roles. Their qualification and love for knowledge were supportive variables of school age for their successful transition to higher education. Parents took keen interest in academic problems and assisted to get tuition for weak academic areas. Parents encouraged the students to participate in school activities yet they did not allow them to take part in sports. Parents were found passive in arranging suitable environment for studies, providing emotional support, encouraging scheduling study time, reviewing school test results, helping in choosing appropriate courses and knowing admission criteria for higher education for their children at school age.

Overall role of peers was insignificant where as for successful transition to higher education similar future planes, way of communication, inspiring to participate in sports and providing loveable environment were inspiring tasks by school friends. It was concluded that specific class motivation by friends was not available at school age; friends did not assisted the students in home work and test preparation. Students negated the role of their school age peers to develop problem-solving approach and to keep involved them in discussion, which were required for better performance at university.

Some students themselves possess their own inherent desire to do well and participate in school that can shape their performance excellent at higher education. Students' self abilities of recalling facts and memorisation, attending classes regularly, being attentive listeners, book consultation and self confidence were matured properly at school age which initiated their success at higher education. Students negated their own role of self motivation, being serious learner, asking questions, intense study habit, participating in sports, language skills and abilities of writing essay/articles at school age in preparing themselves for better performance of higher education.

It was concluded that school environment did not generate positive characteristics to stimulate students for higher education. Physical facilities, inspiring activities, parent teacher meetings and positive language environment were not favourable for students' successful transition to higher education. School curricula was not aligned with skill accomplishment and head teacher's leadership, monitoring and supportive behaviour was also not available to initiate better performance at higher education.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Here a limitation of study should be pointed out i.e. the selection the Public Sector Universities and students enrolled in session 2004-2005. So a study involving Private Sector Universities or some other sessions may yield different results.



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